

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

AUGUST 14, 2008

**Lansing Center
333 E. Michigan
Lansing**

PRESENT FOR THE NRC

Keith Charters, Chair
Frank Wheatlake, Vice-Chair
Mary Brown
Hurley J. Coleman, Jr.
Darnell Earley
John Madigan
J. R. Richardson

PRESENT FOR STAFF

Peter Manning, Legal Counsel
Rebecca Humphries, Director
Rodney Stokes, Chief of Staff
Mindy Koch, Resource Management Deputy
Tom Courchaine, Acting UP Field Deputy
Teresa Gloden, Assistant to the NRC
Other DNR Staff

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chairman Charters called the Committee of the Whole meeting of the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to order at 3:05 p.m.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Doug Reeves, Acting Chief, Wildlife Division, said that Todd Hogrefe, formerly of Wildlife Division, had provided a summary of the recommendations and the process for updating the State Endangered and Threatened Species list. Shortly before he left the DNR, public meetings in Grayling, Lansing, Newberry and Houghton were completed. Although they were advertised widely, attendance was small by comparison with some of our other meetings. A total of 31 people came to the meetings.

The public comment period was June 10-July 10. The Wildlife Division received a total of 47 contacts through e-mails and letters. Some of the contacts have been particularly well thought-out and supported with evidence that is being carefully considered with regard to whether some species should be added to one of the lists and whether others should be removed.

Mr. Reeves announced that **Sherry MacKinnon** has been selected to act as the Endangered Species Coordinator for a few months or until Wildlife Division gets the position filled permanently. She and **Dr. Pat Lederle** have been working through the information that members of the public shared. They have also contacted other experts for their thoughts about the comments received on particular species. Their recommendations will come to the Wildlife Division Management Team next week and are expected to move the document forward to the Legislative Joint Committee on Administrative Rules at the end of next week or early the following week. The decision will then be in the hands of the Legislature. The earliest that the process could be complete is mid-November.

Mr. Reeves noted that no one who attended the meetings spoke against the delisting of wolves but approximately one-half of the letters and e-mails objected to delisting wolves. However, no information has been submitted that will change the recommendation. Staff recommends wolves to be delisted.

Monthly Spend Plan

Jane Schultz, Budget and Support Services, presented the monthly update of the FY 08 budget and spend plan report. She highlighted that additional funds are being added for land acquisition using Land Exchange Facilitation Fund (LEFF) revenue. She also noted other purchases are pending that may alter the spend plan prior to September 30 which is the end of the current fiscal year.

Sharon Schafer, Chief, Budget and Support Services, presented a revenue update. See the following DNR website address:
http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-39002_11862_49123---,00.html

Following are the highlights from those reports:

- Game and Fish Protection Fund revenue to decrease by \$1.5 million – hunting license sales are down and fishing licenses are down slightly.
- The Forest Development Fund looks stable; however, the forest recreation fund is being watched closely.
- Shortfalls will be addressed through expenditure adjustments.
- Parks and Recreation Division projects needing assistance by 2010 – current year revenue estimates decreased by \$700,000.
- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund revenue is projected at \$96 million – an all-time high.
- Gas Tax revenues have been decreasing over the past few years.

Director Humphries noted that the budget projection process is working well this year.

Chairman Charters questioned if staff gets more feedback or questions since the financial status reporting has become more open. **Ms. Schafer** replied no. **Director Humphries** said staff is working on improving the budget reporting process so it is more understandable by everyone.

North Central State Trail Review

Mindy Koch, Resource Management Deputy, stated that in 1997, the Director approved the purchase of 11 miles of lands around Mullett Lake to develop a trail utilizing Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund monies. The Trust Fund Board prohibited snowmobile use on this segment of the trail. In 2006, the DNR requested that the Trust Fund Board remove the snowmobile restriction on this portion of the trail, which was done. In September 2006, the DNR imposed a speed limit and hours restrictions for snowmobiles on this trail. The DNR is committed to enhance enforcement on the trail. The trail is being well used with a high rate of compliance.

Ms. Koch has reviewed comments received from the public on this trail. As a result, restrictions to the existing Land Use Order on the “Mullett Lake Trail” will remain unchanged.

Chairman Charters asked if the trespass issues along this segment of trail have been resolved. **Ms. Koch** said most of them have been resolved, and any remaining issues are being addressed.

Conservation Education

Kevin Frailey, Office of Communications, said, in utilizing the recommendations of the Hunting and Fishing Heritage Task Force strategy, that conservation education is the foundation to overall conservation success.

Several conservation education programs exist such as: Kids Education Web site; 10 interpretive centers around the state with explorer guides; Detroit and Escanaba pocket parks; and the Academy of Natural Resources for teachers. All of these programs and more exist in attempt to get more kids outside to enjoy the many natural resources in the State.

Ray Rustem, Office of Communications, reviewed the “No Child Left Behind” activities and efforts.

Director’s Reports

Dr. Russ Mason was appointed as the new Wildlife Division Chief and will begin on September 8.

The Committee of the Whole meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m. and the Regular meeting of the NRC convened at 4:20 p.m.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

Todd Alofs, Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee (CWAC)
John Bebow, Crawford County resident
Bradley Butcher
Ruth Clemens, Roscommon County
Ernest Dawson, Roscommon
Gaila Gilliland, Crawford County Economic Development Program

Jamie Greer, Crawford County
Dean Hall, Michigan Bow Hunters Association
Ray Hoobler, Pigeon River Country Association
Mark Jermolowicz
Doug McClure
Kim Pappas, Cheboygan Area Chamber of Commerce
Mary Partee
Larry Paxton, Roscommon County Road Commission
Marvin Roberson, Sierra Club
Dale Rohde, Grayling
Amy Spray, MUCC

Mary Partee requested that the North Central State Trail (formerly known as the Gaylord to Cheboygan Trail) be restored to nonmotorized status due to noise issues and the trail crossing over driveways close to homes.

Kim Pappas, Cheboygan Area Chamber of Commerce, supports the North Central State Trail allowing snowmobiles. She appreciates the time, money and efforts put into the project and said it has had a positive impact on the community. Ms. Pappas grew up near this trail when it was a railroad and said the noises on the trail are limited to seasonal now.

Mark Jermolowicz opposes the early antlerless hunting season. He believes September is too warm.

Todd Alofs, Citizens Waterfowl Advisory Committee (CWAC), supported the joint CWAC/DNR waterfowl recommendation as being proposed for NRC action.

Marvin Roberson, Sierra Club, objects to the sale of property in Roscommon County to Axiom Entertainment. If the sale of the property were to move forward, he recommended that the Memorandum of Understanding needs an environmental review and that a drop-dead date be chosen for achieving the appropriate financing as well as completing Phase 1 of the project.

Larry Paxton, Roscommon County Road Commission, said there seems to be a resistance to growth development progress such as Axiom Entertainment's proposed theme park.

Ray Hoobler, Pigeon River Country Association, said on June 23, 2008, the Song of the Morning Ranch Dam failed releasing water and silt into the Pigeon River Country State Forest affecting gravel spawning beds and insect habitat. He recommended that the DNR remove the dam, that the DNR repair the damage, that that the Ranch be fined for this damage. **Peter Manning, Attorney's General Office**, said this issue is being reviewed.

Amy Spray, MUCC, said MUCC is excited to partner with the DNR on the deer management process. She understands the importance of public participation and said it is critical to the process. The Citizen Deer Advisory Team meetings are being held to assist in educating the public. Invitations have been sent out but those who did not get an invitation are still invited to attend.

Ms. Spray noted that on September 29, 2008, a Deer Symposium will be held in Mt. Pleasant. The goal is not only to discuss DNR authority but collaboration with other agencies.

Doug McClure said that there are several members of the public around the area cited for the Axiom Entertainment theme park opposed to the development of the theme park and the reviewed provisions. He does not believe the appraisal requirement in the Memorandum of Understanding has been met or made public.

Jamie Greer, resident of Crawford County and 4 Mile Road, believes the theme park would draw vacationers to Crawford County; does not believe the theme park would negatively affect the river; is willing to take a chance at success of the theme park; and believes the project is a perfect fit for the area and will create jobs for the depressed area.

Bradley Butcher, resident and business owner in the Crawford County area, supports Axiom Entertainment. He believes the theme park would create more jobs sooner than other development. He encouraged the DNR to sell the requested property to Axiom Entertainment.

Gaila Gilliland, Crawford County Economic Development Program, said the Crawford County property that Axiom Entertainment would like to purchase was originally set-aside for development. She asked who in the audience supported the sale of property. Several stood in favor of the sale.

Chairman Charters read a letter from Merle Shepard, Safari Club International, into the record. **Mr. Shepard** believes the NRC should reconvene the Crossbow Disability Work Group without the medial participation and may want to add a few groups like the National Rifle Association, or others to make a recommendation to the NRC on the future use of crossbows in Michigan. Issues he believes should be considered are: 1) should the NRC consider a crossbow season and when should it take place; 2) should crossbows be legal to use when hunting bear, elk and turkey as well; 3) with pending legislation, sportsmen should have concern that this would ultimately succeed in trumping the NRC on crossbows.

Ruth Clemens, Roscommon County, supports Axiom Entertainment because she believes it would boost the local economy.

Ernest Dawson, small business owner in Roscommon, supports Axiom Entertainment.

John Bebow, Crawford County resident, wants change in Crawford County, but wants to ensure nature can work side-by-side with development. He opposes the Axiom Entertainment proposal.

Dale Rohde, Grayling resident, supports Axiom Entertainment and believes the DNR should donate the requested property to Axiom Entertainment.

Dean Hall, Michigan Bow Hunters, supports the recommendations of the Crossbow Disability Work Group.

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The Public Appearances portion of the meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m. and the Regular Meeting of the NRC immediately convened.

Axiom Entertainment

Following are Director Humphries' comments regarding the Axiom Entertainment Proposal:

The DNR was first approached in March of 2006 regarding this proposal. In June of 2006, the DNR issued a Letter of Intent to Axiom Entertainment to assist in securing financing for the project. This Letter of Intent expired December 13, 2006, and was not renewed by agreement of both parties.

Since March 2006, numerous meetings have been held involving the DNR, Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and Michigan Department of Transportation, as well as the Crawford County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) and Axiom Entertainment. In June of this year, I directed staff to prepare the memo for this project, so the public would have full access to what is being considered.

At the July 2008 NRC meeting, Mr. Patrick Crosson clearly indicated the following:

- Agreement that all financing must be in place prior to any sale;
- That he is not requesting a letter from the DNR stating that we will sell him the land.

The DNR has received significant input from interest groups and the public, both in support and opposition to the project. The project is controversial. It is unprecedented to sell 1,600 acres of state forest land and its proximity to the Au Sable River is of concern for many.

Since the July 2008 NRC meeting, the DNR has removed 260 acres from consideration for this project. These acres are considered ancillary, and not related to the Theme Park development.

After two and a half years of work on this potential land sale, Director Humphries believes it is important to establish some definitive timeframes for progress to be made. Therefore, she established the following:

- A six month timeframe (until February 16, 2009) for Axiom to demonstrate that full funding has been secured for the entire project. The funding needs to be verified by the State of Michigan through the MEDC and an independent third party within this timeframe;
- Once Axiom Entertainment is able to secure credible financing, and verified by an independent review, the DNR will initiate the process to approve the sale of

- the property. The deed transfer would not occur until all State and Federal permits are secure and the terms of the phased sale are met;
- The developer would then have nine months to secure permits and begin Phase I.

This parcel is part of Michigan's state forest system. In anticipation of this project, DNR's managers have not performed timber work on the property. Director Humphries has instructed staff that salvage sales should occur to harvest diseased timber while this project moves forward.

Commissioner Earley thanked Director Humphries for developing timeframes for the Axiom Entertainment proposal.

CLOSED SESSION

The NRC went into closed session from 5:47 p.m. until 6:20 p.m. to discuss Litigation matters.

The NRC reconvened at 6:30 p.m.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 10, 2008 NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

Commissioner Coleman made a motion, supported by **Commissioner Madigan**, for approval. Motion carried 6-0 with **Commissioner Wheatlake** abstaining.

2009 NRC MEETING DATES

Commissioner Wheatlake made a motion, supported by **Commissioner Richardson**, to approve the following dates for the 2009 NRC Meetings:

January 8
February 5
March 5
April 2
May 7
June 4
July 9
August 13
September 10
October 8
November 5
December 3

Motion unanimously carried.

WATERFOWL AND OTHER MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR 2008-2009, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER, AMENDMENT NO. 13 OF 2008

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by Commissioner Brown, for approval. Motion unanimously carried.

CROSSBOWS PERMITS FOR HUNTERS WITH DISABILITIES, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORDER, AMENDMENT NO. 14 OF 2008

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by Commissioner Coleman, for approval. Commissioner Coleman asked that further discussion is held on additional crossbow issues, which will be done. Motion unanimously carried.

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by Commissioner Coleman, that the NRC seek Legislative authority by way of amendment to Act 451 to allow the DNR to issue crossbow permits for hunters with certain temporary disabilities which prevent hunters from using conventional archery equipment. Motion unanimously carried.

DIRECTOR ACTIONS

Director Humphries stated her intent to sign all of the Director's action items on the Agenda **except the "Sale of Dedicated State-owned Land, AuSable State Forest – Crawford County, Land Transaction Case #19980101 (Axiom Entertainment)."**

Director Humphries commented on three conservation easements on the Agenda. She said they are not typical conservation easements in the usual sense because of the nature of the rights to be held by the DNR. They are more of a partnership with a land conservancy for shared ownership of the property for public purpose.

The DNR divisions made applications to the Natural Resources Trust Fund Board in 2005 and 2006 for funding the projects as conservation easements. Several such projects have been approved by the Trust Fund Board and appropriated by the Legislature.

However, the conservation easements are not exactly the same as previous ones. So, over the last three years, as the details of these three projects were being finalized, it has not become evident that complete ownership of the full rights in the properties may be more advantageous.

Director Humphries recommended the following:

1. Funding was approved by the Trust Fund Board and Legislature for conservation easements, not for the complete rights in the properties. The DNR will discuss these projects at the next meeting of the Trust Fund Board and seek concurrence that these properties should be acquired in fee title.
2. Once the above has occurred, the DNR will work with the respective conservancies to proceed to purchase these easements in fee title. Director Humphries asked that staff from the Office of Land and Facilities work with conservancy partners,

along with the Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division and Parks and Recreation Division, to pursue a plan for fee title acquisition by the DNR of the properties in the near future.

Commissioner Madigan asked if the conservancy is benefiting from selling to the State of Michigan, any monetary gain or are they just doing as a transfer? **David Freed** said no – they are in one case assisting by adding money to the acquisition until a Natural Resources Trust Fund appropriation is approved.

Chairman Charters requested that Rodney Stokes and Mindy Koch develop a long-term plan or develop criteria on what easements the DNR should be interested in, if any. **Director Humphries** said a couple of issues exist. One is with the joint ownership and tracking that ownership in future generations. Second, there are additional complications because the DNR funds the management of the public land base from the resources that come from the lands. In many cases those resources are not available to fund the management of the lands.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

NRC Policy Committee on Technology, Information, Marketing and Education

See the Attached Minutes

NRC Policy Committee on Parks and Recreation

See the Attached Minutes.

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries

See the Attached Minutes.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Richardson thanked Tom Courchaine and Bill Scullon for a good meeting of the UP Habitat Work Group in July.

Commissioner Madigan attended the Bear Regulations meeting in Newberry and said they were good meetings.

Commissioner Coleman commended staff for a good meeting of the NRC Policy Committee on Parks and Recreation.

Chairman Charters attended the Bear Regulations meeting in Hillman and complimented Wildlife Division staff for their presentations.

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The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

**NRC Policy Committee on
Technology, Information, Marketing and Education**

Meeting convened at 9:30 a.m.

Commissioners Present: Mary Brown, Hurley Coleman, J.R. Richardson, and Keith Charters

Academy of Natural Resources

Kevin Frailey, Office of Communications, presented an update on the academy and how the program got started. He mentioned that at this year's academy there were a total of nineteen participants; including one college professor, and an outdoor writer. The participants left with a lot of beneficial material that will be useful in their classrooms.

Detroit Pocket Park

Kevin Frailey, Office of Communications, presented an update on the scheduled summer programs at the Detroit pocket park. The programs are put in place by Gary Williams, MSUE/DNR employee. The scheduled contained the Boys & Girls Club, The Salvation Army, the parks and recreation division of the City of Detroit and several other surrounding area recreation centers and departments.

Gary Williams reported thus far, the number of participants that the programs have brought in was approximately 1,200 children and 250 adults.

Interpretive Center Participation Update – Jon Spieles and Janet Canode

Jon Spieles, Office of Communications, UP Office, presented an update on the visitor centers located within the UP and the northern half of the state and an overview of the work that the interpreters do at their centers. The Tahquamenon Falls "Fact Shack" has been a success. This site attracts the attention of every visitor that comes to the Tahquamenon Falls; this site is a hands-on exhibit, along with educational information. The DNR is host to different groups and organizations on a regular basis in the summertime.

Janet Canode, Office of Communications, presented an update on the visitor centers located within the southern half of the state. The Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery is home to the first ever gift shop ran by DNR staff at the hatchery. Janet mentioned that the revenue from the gift shop goes back into the game and fish fund.

She mentioned that there is a proposal to renovate the existing "Beach House" at the Ludington Visitor Center.

The meeting adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

NRC POLICY COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

Committee Chairman Coleman called the meeting of the NRC Policy Committee on Parks and Recreation to order at 10:30 a.m. Also present for the Committee were Commissioners Brown and Richardson. Commissioners Charters and Wheatlake were also present.

Urban Outreach Initiative

1. Parks and Recreation Division (PRD), Bay City District Supervisor Carl Lindell, Department Specialist Monica Terrell, Bay City Park Ranger Jackie Culberson, Sleepy Hollow Park Supervisor Tim Machowicz and Explorer Ranger Katie Robinson presented a powerpoint outlining the Urban Outreach Initiative including its ties to the DNR stretch goals, PRD outreach goals and desired outcomes. The presentation included photos of events that attracted the Boys and Girls Clubs of Flint, Saginaw and Bay City, and Global Dads of America in Flint, faith-based outreach in Bay City, Saginaw, Flint and Pontiac.
2. The presentation also updated the Committee on the Mentoring Program underway at Warren Dunes State Park and PRD's participation in the Cities of Promise program.

Commissioner Richardson asked how Lansing children sign up for the outreach program at Sleep Hollow State Park. Staff responded that a sign-up sheet is posted at 18 recreation center locations. The PRD spent \$2,000 to host 500-600 kids in this program this year.

Commissioner Coleman praised the PRD outreach effort stating, "it is easier than trying to create our own audience"

The powerpoint will also be presented to the city of Lansing, City Council.

Commissioner Charters suggested that staff make the presentation to legislators.

Commissioner Wheatlake asked if Child Labor Laws were followed with the Warren Dunes Mentoring program.

Monica Terrell affirmed that all labor laws were followed.

Commissioner Coleman stated, (regarding PRD's faith based outreach) "Pastors felt the park was theirs when they drove by after visiting. We need to build more on this. Tie it to financial support of our programs."

Monica Terrell closed with the 6 reasons people use or do not use a facility:
Tradition, Awareness, Comfort Level, Marketing, Transportation, Value/Importance

Suggestions made for additional support for the programs included: utilizing the Community Reinvestment Act; contacting bus companies to contribute; and partnering with Centershot Ministries for archery programming.

A presentation on the Idlewild project was postponed until a future meeting since time constraints would not permit a full discussion.

Commission Coleman adjourned the meeting at noon.

NRC POLICY COMMITTEE ON WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

The Michigan Ducks Hunters Association presented a print of this year's duck stamp to Director Humphries and the NRC. The Director thanked the group for their incredible partnership and efforts.

Doug Reeves, Acting Wildlife Division Chief, explained the new partnership with the Michigan Bear Hunters Association (MBHA). The DNR and MBHA have signed a (Memorandum of Agreement) MOA in regards to production of future DNR bear patches. Proceeds from the patch will be provided to the DNR for use on wildlife management and education activities.

Doug also introduced **Barbara Avers** as the new wetland/waterfowl specialist and **AI Stewart** as Acting Assistant Chief.

Waterfowl Season Recommendations

Barbara Avers, Wildlife Division, reviewed the proposed duck season dates and bag limits. Barb explained the Federal framework that the Division can work with and how the Citizen's Waterfowl Advisory Committee (CWAC) was involved in the recommendation. She thanked CWAC for their efforts. Both the DNR and CWAC approve of the recommendations. In addition to the Federal framework, the two groups also take into consideration the following when deciding on recommendations: waterfowl population status, hunter input and success (CWAC, hunter harvest, and opinion surveys), migration patterns, and weather trends.

2008-2009 Michigan Duck Season Recommendations

Dates: North Zone (Oct. 4 – Dec. 2); Middle Zone (Oct. 4 – Nov. 30 & Dec. 6 – Dec. 7); and South Zone (Oct. 11 – Dec. 7 & Jan. 3 – Jan. 4).

Daily Limits: 6 ducks combined – Mallard (4 birds total -1 hen); Wood duck (3 birds); Redheads (2 birds); Northern pintail and American black duck (1 bird each); Scaup (20 days with 2 birds and 40 days with 1 bird) and all other ducks (6 birds). Canvas backs have a closed season. Recommend 5 mergansers combined (2 hooded).

Michigan Scaup Season Dates: North Zone (Oct. 11 – Oct. 30); Middle Zone (Oct 18 – Nov. 6); South Zone (Oct. 25 – Nov. 13).

Goose Season Recommendations

Dave Luukkonen, Wildlife Division, provided the recommendations for the 2009 goose season based on federal frameworks, which he outlined in detail. Dave explained that the Federal framework did change the Michigan regular goose season managements units to align with the Michigan duck season management units.

2008 – 2009 Michigan Canada Goose Season Recommendations

Regular season dates: Northern Goose Zone (Sept. 22 – Nov. 5); Middle Goose Zone (Oct. 4 – Nov. 10 & Nov. 27 – Dec. 7); South Goose Zone (Oct. 11 – Nov. 13 & Nov. 27 – Dec. 7)

Goose Management Unit Dates: Tuscola & Saginaw County GMUs (Oct. 11 – Nov. 13 & Nov. 27 – Dec. 7 & Jan 1 – Feb. 1); Muskegon County Wastewater GMU (Oct. 14 – Nov. 13 & Dec. 2 – 15); Allegan County GMU (Nov. 8 – 10 & Dec. 20 – Jan. 30)
Late Season Dates: South Zone (Jan. 3 – Feb. 1)

2008 Michigan Canada Goose Season Daily Limits Recommendations: All regular seasons (2 birds per day); and Late season (5 birds per day).

Lead Fragments in Venison

Dr. Steve Schmitt, Wildlife Division, provided an update on lead fragments found in venison. **Dr. Linda Dykema** from the Department of Community Health (MDC) was also present. Steve explained the issue had come to the forefront back in March of 2008 and that in Western states lead fragments have been found in packaged venison. Michigan venison provided through the Sportsmen Against Hunger program had been tested by March and, therefore, could not be tested for lead.

In June 2008, a meeting of seven Midwestern states' Fish and Wildlife, Health, Agriculture agencies, industry representatives, and hunting organizations met in Minneapolis to address and plan a course of action on the issue of lead fragments in venison.

Key points from the meeting included new information indicating that small lead particles are often present in hunter-harvested venison, especially ground venison, but have not been linked to any illnesses. To reduce risk of lead exposure, people should liberally trim around the wound channel, choose whole muscle cuts over ground meat, avoid consuming internal organs, improve marksmanship to get closer, cleaner, lethal shots away from major muscle area. Risk can be reduced even further by using ammunition that is less prone to fragment or does not contain lead.

The Centers for Disease Control is expected to complete a study in the fall of 2008 on whether there are health risks for people who eat venison.

In Michigan, personnel from DNR, MDC, and MDA have met and discussed the issue. Information on precautions to minimize potential lead exposure appears in the 2008 Hunting and Trapping Guide and is being sent to licensed venison processors. Random testing of venison will be done this fall on samples from the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger.

St. Mary's River Update

Neal Godby, Fisheries Division, provided an update on the St. Mary's River (SMR). The SMR is an international boundary water. It contains major game species of both migratory and resident fish and received significant fishing pressure. It is stocked by the DNR and partners. The DNR is a member of the St. Mary's River Fisheries Task Group along with others including Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority and Lake Superior State University (40,000 Atlantic salmon each year). A 2006 survey reported a total of 31 fish species within the river. Other SMR projects include and issues include: Lamprey control, compensating gates/flows, Cormorant control, Sturgeon research, Cisco (lake

herring) culture – pilot project, and habitat protection/improvement. Survey report is available at: www.glfc.org/lakecom/lhc/SMR2006rpt.pdf

Statewide Regulations

James Dexter, Fisheries Division, provided recommended changes to the statewide fishing regulations in relation to two issues. Jim explained that there appears to be opportunity to increase daily bag limits of salmon to five a day and the number of lines to three.

Jim provided a timeline of why the regulations exist as they do today and why Fisheries Division is comfortable with increasing the salmon bag limit and the use of more lines. The proposal is only for Chinook and Coho salmon because they are the species that are most often asked about and anglers are generally satisfied with the regulations for other species. A Fisheries Division review of potential harvest with higher bag limits verified previous thoughts that higher daily bag limit would not result in a substantial number of additional fish being harvested. The Department has the authority to make this change.

Relating to the increase in lines that can be used, the DNR does not have the authority to increase the number of rods statewide – it must be done legislatively by opening statute and obtaining a sponsor. Fisheries Division believes that raising the number of lines to three will present no significant biological concern; however, raising the limit to three on piers could cause conflict through allocation of space. Fisheries does feel increased line per angler will result in no risk of over harvest.

Fisheries met with all four Great Lakes Fishery Advisory Committee members in April 2008 to discuss these issues and finalize the proposals. Statewide news releases, radio interviews, and all information was posted on the DNR website along with an email address where interested citizens could voice their opinion with the results for DBL and 3 lines being quite favorable to enact future change.

A final decision on the salmon bag limit will be made next week and will bring issue back to the Director and NRC in September. Undecided at this time on process and path to follow regarding rod limit as this will require a sponsor. Both issues are moving toward further simplification or regulations.

Bear and Deer Management Plans

Kelly Siciliano Carter, Wildlife Division, provided an update on public meetings about bears. There were four bear issue scoping meetings conducted across the state: Crystal Falls, Newberry, Hillman and Cadillac. The last meeting is scheduled for August 18 in Lansing. Two of the Commissioners attended meetings. Kelly explained that the next step in the bear management planning process is to put together a Statewide Consultation team. This team will be charged with providing the DNR with guidance on a variety of issues.

Next, **Kelly and Amy Spray, MUCC**, discussed how MUCC and DNR have partnered to develop a stakeholder accepted deer management plan. MUCC will take the lead in discussing deer management with the public through a variety of venues and will

compile all the information they receive and provide to the DNR. Kelly explained the mission of deer management in Michigan and outlined the steps of the planning process. Amy explained how MUCC is creating a Statewide Michigan Citizen Deer Advisory Team and Regional Deer Advisory Teams. A letter was sent to numerous stakeholder organizations asking them to be involved in the statewide team. MUCC hopes to convene the team at the end of September.

Kelly and Amy also outlined the plan timeline:

- May 2008 - MUCC/DNR partnership formed
- Sept. 2008 – Citizen Deer Advisory Team Kickoff
The Science of Deer Management - public symposium
- Feb. 2009 – Focus Groups
- July 2009 – Summary of Public engagement complete
- Jan. 2010 – Draft plan available
- April 2010 – Management plan finalized

Amy presented information about the deer symposium, titled “The Science of Deer Management”, which will be held Sept. 29, 2008 at the Mt. Pleasant Comfort Inn & Suites from 8 am to 4:30 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.